Senior Companion Program

Seniors befriending seniors

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By CARIN GREEN
Payson Correspondent

The Senior Companion Program (SCP) provides an opportunity for the elderly to help other elderly — benefitting the giver and the receiver.

One senior citizen, called a companion, is assigned to one or more clients (other senior citizens) that are shut-in or just need a visitor. The companion receives a free physical examination, one free hot meal, and a small stipend to help defray out-of-pocket expenses. Insurance is also provided.

The companions also receive extensive training (40 hours) from professionals in the medical, legal and therapeutic fields, fill out medical forms (Medicaid or Medicare), and how to cope and handle emergencies. This training helps them meet the needs of their clients. This continues with inservice training in subsequent months.

The companion works 20 hours per week and visits the client several times during the week to help him or her with their needs. Some advantages the companions provide the client with include helping them with personal care, taking the client to the doctor, helping with medication, taking them for walks or to the movies, going to the senior citizen center, going on picnics or other activities, reading, playing cards or just visiting.

The SCP is a federally funded program that is relatively new to Utah County. The program is administered through Mountain Lands Government and pilots the program for Utah, Wasatch, and Summit counties. Ogden and Salt Lake were the first in the state to incorporate the program. The SCP receives a federal grant, and must match a portion of the funds with donations or other monies.

The SCP also provides a way for the family of terminally ill patients to have respite. "The people need to get away from the stress and pressure of the situation. The companion provides a way for the family members to get away and have time to themselves," said Jim Slade, program director.

"Loneliness is the number one problem the elderly encounters," said Slade. "The elderly usually sit around and think of themselves, and get sick and feel shut in. This program provides an avenue for the elderly to forget about themselves."

"I feel this program is vital and delays the institutionalization of homebound adults," said Rey Hutchinson, station coordinator for the south end of the county. She stressed the program provides mental, emotional, and physical, assistance from outside sources for those who need it.

"We call these volunteers friendship groups."

"We want to give the clients an opportunity for normalcy in this life." said Lynn Robbins of Robbins Residential Care Center.

Although suspicious at first, it takes time for the companion and client to warm up to each other. The trust develops over a period of time and friendships become strong and supportive. "The client misses the companion when they take a day off or they do not call," said Slade.

People become involved for a variety of reasons. "This gives me a chance to work with old folks, and gives me something to do," said John Snelders, 72, of Santaquin. Snelders has been visiting with the residents in Robbins Living Center for three months. "Knowing I'm helping someone who needs it is satisfying."

Cashus Casper, 90, is Snelder's favorite person. "We have developed a friendship. He was suspicious at first, but now when I'm not here, he misses and asks for me. That is very satisfying to me," said Snelders. "We're buddies. John is a good-natured fellow who treats everybody well."

"He's taken care of me and helped me with what I need," said Casper.

Margaret Hulbert, 70, a retired nurse, immigrated to America from Dusseldorf Germany. After raising her son, she wanted to fill her spare time and enjoyed being of service. She finds self-fulfillment in the work. "This gives me a purpose to live — it is very important to me and helps me be happy. It also helps the client get out of their routine. I also like to listen, and they like to talk," she said. "It gives me an opportunity to mix with people that are loveable; that means a lot to me."

Bea Gibson, 90, works closely with Hulbert. "We take walks and talk, and she is marvelous. I miss her when she's not here."

Companions are needed in the northern and southern end of the county. For information, contact Jim Slade at 377-2262, or Rey Hutchinson, coordinator for Mountain View Hospital, 465-9201.



Photo by Carin Green

Cashus Casper, right, misses his senior companion, John Snelders, left, when John can't come for a visit.

Don't let the bad bugs take over



Josephine Zimmerman

GARDEN EDITOR

Just when the gardening season is going well, the problem insects emerge.

Grasshoppers have hatched and are beginning to devour everything in sight. The hoppers are small now, and easy to control, so don't wait. The larger they grow, the more difficult they are to kill.

Spray with Sevin or Diazonin.

It's sad to report that the bugs are after your lawn, too. Sod webworms and billbugs have been reported throughout the area, a little earlier in the season than usual.

The sod webworms can be extremely destructive. The adults are buff-colored moths that do not damage the lawns. They are often described as "millers" with a body length of about half an inch. The wings are wrapped around the body and a snout-like projection extends from the head, giving the insect a somewhat tubular appearance. Fortunately, the birds like them. The moths are flushed out of their hiding places when you mow the lawn or disturb shrubbery. They may also be seen flying in zig-zag patterns just above the grass at dusk, or collecting on doors and windows and around outside lights. At this stage, they are not doing any damage, but their life cycle is short, and they will soon be laying their eggs.

The damaging larvae can be one-half inch to one inch long, with brown spots, dark or light brown heads, and are usually curled.

The larvae clip off the blades of grass just above the sod. You may notice small dead patches in the normally growing grass. There may also be small, silk-lined tunnels in the ground. Sod webworms seem to like the sunny parts of the lawn, and are seldom found in heavily shaded turf.

Lawns damaged by the larvae do not recovery rapidly.

Ofthanal is effective in controlling the sod webworms.

Billbugs damage the lawn both as adults and larvae. The adults eat holes in the leaves, and the larvae feed on roots and the base of the grass plant.

Billbugs are beetles. The adults may be dull gray to grayish black and have a distinctive snout or "bill" at the front of the head. They hide in the grass and are active mostly at night.

The larvae are small, from one-eighth to three-eights inches long. They are pear-shaped and curled, with distinctive brown heads. As the larvae hatch, they feed on the grass leaves, then move to the soil to feed on the crowns and roots, causing the most serious damage.

If billbugs damage a large area of lawn, it won't grow back. It will have to be re-planted or re-sodded.

If there are dry spots on your lawn, dig in the turf. Since the billbug larvae eat away the roots, the sod should come up like a mat.

Diazinon and Sevin are effective in controlling billbugs. The chemicals in granular form can also be used, but make sure you water the material in to a depth of about one-inch. The larvae can be found in the top three-fourths to one-inch of soil.

Gypsy moths have been found in the northeast part of Provo, according to Darren Allred, phytosanitary engineer with the Utah Department of Agriculture.

Agriculture officials are now surveying the area in an effort to determine the scope of the infestation and what methods of control will be needed.

Tips for buying mailorder nursery stock

A resurgence of mailorder [s]opping by America's consum[er]s is fairly simple to explain. [Fu]el costs are keeping more [pe]ople close to home. This, [co]upled with the development [of] sophisticated packaging and [de]livery methods by many mai[lor]der firms has made catalog [pu]rchasing a more attractive [alt]ernative than before.

This growing popularity is [be]ing experienced by the mai[lor]der nursery industry. Their [ca]talogs have long been fami[lia]r friends in millions of [ho]mes, and the pictures and [ga]rdening information they pro[vi]de have brightened many [wi]nter days for people impa[tie]nt for spring.

A current change being expe[rie]nced by the mailorder nur[ser]ies is that, while previously [the]ir customers were often out[sid]e the major shopping areas, [the]se days more and more suburban and urban shoppers are looking to them to meet their needs for living plants and related products for the yard and garden.

For many of these new customers, nursery shopping by mail is an unfamiliar experience, and the American Association of Nurserymen provides answers to some of the questions most frequently asked.

• How can I be confident about the mailorder nursery firm I decide to shop with?

The home or gaden magazines in which the mailorder companies advertise are familiar with them. If you want to investigate, you can direct your inquiry to the magazine. Often a friend or neighbor will recommend a favorite firm. Your own experience the first time you purchase will tell you a great deal about the company.

• What if I am not satisfied with what I get?

Any reputable mailorder nursery has a guarantee policy more comprehensive than most other types of purchase you can make. The very least you can expect is a refund of your money, or replacement of the material purchased, whichever you prefer.

• Do I really save money shopping by mail?

Even aside from savings in time and travel, the prices in most nursery catalogs are less than you would pay for comparable quality available through other distribution channels. But the AAN warns, beware of "fantastic" bargain offers you sometimes see advertised, along with outlandish claims relating to growing, flowering or fruiting of trees and shrubs. Reputable nurseries give full and accurate descriptions of their living plants according to "American Standards for N[ur]sery Stock" established by t[he] AAN.

• I like to look and tou[ch] before I decide; what can I [do] about that?

That is something a mail[or]der nursery can't provide (e[x]cept, of course, you can retu[rn] the item if it doesn't look [or] feel as you expected). Th[ey] compensate by showing co[lor] photographs, giving comple[te] descriptions, and adding f[ull] planting and care instructions.

Certainly, there are times [to] shop in other ways, and a vi[sit] to a nursery garden center c[an] be a pleasant experience. T[he] mailorder nursery people kn[ow] that, and do not consider the[m]selves to be in competition w[ith] your favorite nursery down t[he] street.

What they provide is wi[der] variety than most retail est[ab]lishments can stock.

Cashus Ray Casper